


# The Legal Transformations of Secularism

## The Legal Transformations of Secularism

 5 Mar 2024 - 17:45 / 19:15

 Via Parenzo

 Meeting room: 15

**Speaker** Stephanie Henne-vauchez, Université Paris Nanterre

**Chair** Prof. Daniele Gallo (Luiss Guido Carli)

### Abstract

In 21st-century France, much is expected of laïcité, which is progressively shifting in legal and political discourse from an organizational constitutional principle to a behavioral one -at the risk



of becoming discriminatory. Laïcité, then, is a “strong” word with major implications for our society. As the paragon of republican

values enjoying renewed exaltation, laïcité tends to stand for a metonym of the Republic and is then asked to settle a multitude of questions. What are the acceptable limits to the right to wear religious clothing – at school, at work or at the swimming pool? How should the challenges of “communitarianism” or «separatism» be addressed? Shouldn’t freedom of expression be more heavily regulated? Faced with this ever-increasing presence of “laïcité” in the public debate, my research foregrounds documents the «law and politics» dynamics at play in the evolutions in the meaning(s) associated with laïcité. In my talk, I will recall that historically, the legal principle of laïcité was designed, first and foremost, to organize relations between the State and religions – in other words, it said little if nothing about individual or collective behavior. Laïcité as it started being articulated at the end of the 19th century and throughout most of the 20th rested on three main pillars: separation (of Church and State), guarantee (of freedom of worship) and neutrality (of public authorities). Since the beginning of the 21st century, however, there have been many upheavals in this republican and arguably liberal regime of secularism. Laïcité increasingly is used the antonym of freedom of worship, as it generates obligations of discretion, if not religious neutrality, weighing on private individuals. The analysis of these evolutions is critical, both from a point of view internal to laïcité (is laïcité still neutral under this new regime?) and from that, external, of wider republican values (is laïcité equal in this new regime?).

### **About the speaker**

Stephanie Hennette-Vauchezis Professor of Public Law at Université Paris Nanterre since 2010, where she served as Director of CREDOF (Centre de recherches et d’études sur les droits fondamentaux) from 2015 to 2023. Since 2019, she is a senior member of the Institut universitaire de France. Previously, she directed the Human Rights Masters program (2011-2017). She is also co-founder (with Laurence Sinopoli and Anne Danis-Fatôme) of



the EUCLID program, the Nanterre Law Clinic ([EUCLID – UFR Droit et Science Politique \(parisnanterre.fr\)](#)), which she co-directed for several years. Before joining Université Paris Nanterre, she was a professor at Université Paris Est Créteil (2002-2007), at the European University Institute in Florence (Marie Curie Fellow), and visiting professor at Princeton University (USA, 2013-14). From 2011 to 2018, she was a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Emilie du Chatelet Institute on Women, Gender and Sexuality. She was President of the Scientific Council of the Droit & Justice research mission (since 2012), member of the Scientific Council of the Institut du Genre (CNRS, 2012-2015). From 2011 to 2015, she was in charge, with Marc Pichard and Diane Roman, of the REGINE project (Recherches et études sur le genre et les inégalités dans les normes en Europe: [Regine \(parisnanterre.fr\)](#)).

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